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CEREBUS
mothers & daughters
9

159
JUN

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

Today it is May 26 and this is absolutely the last part of the issue that I have to complete before leaving for Kansas City on Thursday. (Kansas City here I come. Yeah, yeah) and the Great Eastern Convention with the original self-publishing comics artist, Rich Corben. Having never met Mr. Corben before, I am certainly looking forward to it. Miami was great. We only had the chance to put the name of the sponsor store; Glen Lightfoot's *Superheroes Unlimited* in the book once, since neither Fred nor I knew of any Miami-area stores and none had contacted us. The issue ended up shipping the day before the appearance, which limited the turn-out to Good Old Days numbers (seven or eight), but it was really nice as a change of pace after Chicago. I got to do really detailed sketches for everyone (Cerebus and Jaka, Lord Julius, Red Sophia at her seductive best; nothing like drawing a dynamite set of hooters with the smell of salt air wafting in through the front door). Despite what the name would suggest, *Superheroes Unlimited* is actually one of the Good Stores with a nice selection of alternative material, hardcovers, etc., etc. We had had absolutely no time to work on the media side for Miami, but still got a very nice half page write-up in the *Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel* ("A Cerebral Comic-Book Rebel Hits Town") courtesy of *Sun-Sentinel* news editor and *Cerebus* fan Avido D. Khahaifa (Thanks, Avido) and a full page write-up (with colour photo of me and Ger, no less) in *XS*, the Miami Arts and Entertainment newspaper. I'd like to thank Linda Ellis for waiting so patiently at the convention while Gerhard and I signed all the books (again) for the six hours the convention was open. I'd also like to thank Linda for conducting her *XS* interview by the hotel pool so I could grab the last two hours of sunshine (I've always suspected the Canadian flag is red and white because that's what colour we are when we come back from the sunny south).

★★★★★★★★★★

The next day, I flew up to Madison, Wisconsin for the Capital City Trade Show, sharing a booth with Martin Wagner of *Hepcats*. All the retailers were given a coupon for a jam print of Cerebus with Erika. What a trip. Having been under the misapprehension that the retailers are mostly anti-Cerebus, it was very heartening to meet so many wonderful people who are big supporters of the book; and even *more* heartening to see so many of them who hadn't heard of *Hepcats* picking up a set of the books that Martin had out on the table and promising to order a few copies to sell in their stores. Retailers lining up for two hours and longer just to chat a little bit and get an autograph and a head-sketch, and a few books signed as well. Amazing. Mr. T was there promoting what is obviously going to be a contender for Lame Comic of the Year from Now Comics (so you can imagine how badly *his* career is going). At one point someone came and told Martin and I that our line-up was longer than Mr. T's. I had to laugh. "I should hope so," sez I, "I've been drawing a comic book for these stores for fourteen years. That *should* count for something." I managed to keep my contact with the unpleasant bureaucrats of the Big Two to a level verging on non-existent, although I *did* attend the Marvel dinner celebrating Spider-man's 30th anniversary, resisting the urge at one point to pound an empty wine carafe on the table and start a chant of "DIT-KO! DIT-KO" or "KIR-BY! KIR-BY!" Steve Ditko was mentioned a total of twice. Kirby, of course, wasn't mentioned at all. The food was great. "You ate a lot of *X-men* ones last year; now have some filet to go with it" was what I thought. They actually had a guy in a Spider-man costume as one of the dais speakers. John Romita, Sr. thanked Stan Lee for giving him gray hair, an expanding waist-line and a non-existent bank account. Stan Lee, stooping to a new low in bad taste, said that there was no truth to the rumour that the riots in Los Angeles were caused by fans who couldn't find the new Marvel Comics . . . while everyone's gorge was still lurching over that one, he added that there was also no truth to the rumour that the L.A. riots were stopped when Terry Stewart sent in the X-Men. This was the day after Rodney King's emotional and moving plea on television, mind you. I left at the first opportune moment, as someone announced from the dais (I swear I'm not making this up) "If you haven't already eaten the birthday cake at your table, now is the time to eat cake." Where is Robespierre when we need him? Fortunately, I had the very pleasant company of Dave Caldwell, manager of Capital City's San Leandro warehouse to keep my mind off of this disgusting nonsense. A real gentleman who was kind enough to share his Warehouse Manager table with myself, Martin and John Christian of *Paper Heroes*.

I really shouldn't belabour this, but it was really one of those occasions when one is completely unable to believe what one is hearing. It was the only low point in a highly-charged, exciting and pleasurable two days. I'd like to thank Milton and John and Marty Stever and everyone else; most especially all of the retailers who waited so patiently in line for Martin and myself. Everything was just terrific and we're already seeing an increase in circulation just from showing up. As soon as I got back, I started on a jam piece of *Cerebus*, *Hepcats* and *A Distant Soil* for the Diamond Trade Show in June that Martin is finishing right now. Martin, Colleen and I are really looking forward to it.

My next four weekends are Kansas City, Minneapolis (Lekas & Levine have already turned up two TV interviews on Fox and the local ABC News, a radio interview and a feature in the local daily paper), the Diamond Trade Show in Baltimore and Albany.

If I manage to live through it, I'll tell you all about it next time.

CEREBUS

NO. 159 **JUNE 1992**

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

LINDA BERZINS
Typesetting

MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS
a novel

•

BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 151 to Cerebus 162)
Flight

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 163 to Cerebus 174)

•

BOOK THREE
(Cerebus 175 to Cerebus 188)

•

BOOK FOUR
(Cerebus 189 to Cerebus 200)

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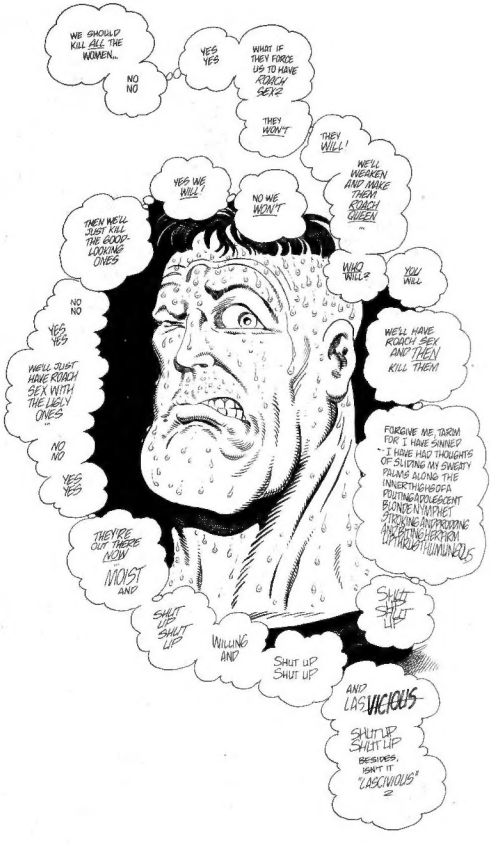

WE SHOULD KILL ALL THE WOMEN...
NO NO
YES YES
WHAT IF THEY FORCE US TO HAVE ROACH SEX?
THEY WON'T
THEY WILL!
WE'LL WEAKEN AND MAKE THEM ROACH QUEEN
WHO WILL?
YOU WILL
YES WE WILL
NO WE WON'T
THEN WE'LL JUST KILL THE GOOD-LOOKING ONES
NO NO
YES YES
WE'LL JUST HAVE ROACH SEX WITH THE UGLY ONES...
NO NO
YES YES
WE'LL HAVE ROACH SEX AND THEN KILL THEM
FORGIVE ME, TARIM FOR I HAVE SINNED
I HAVE HAD THOUGHTS OF SLIDING MY SWEATY PALMS ALONG THE INNER THIGHS OF A PULSATING ADOLESCENT BUNNEN IMPALED STROKING AND PROBING AND PENETRATION UP INTO HUMANOIDS
THEY'RE OUT THERE NOW
MOIST AND
SHUT UP SHUT UP
WILLING AND
SHUT UP SHUT UP
SHUT SHUT UP
AND LAS VICIOUS
SHUT UP SHUT UP
BESIDES, ISN'T IT "LASCIVIOUS"?

LIKE INNESH.
eh?
EMPTY...
GRIM...
EXCEPT FOR ONE CRUSTY OLD COOT CALLED THE JUDGE...
WHO TALKS ABOUT NOTHING BUT THE GODDESS ALL THE TIME...
HAHAHAHA

YES. OF COURSE OF COURSE ...
ALL OF US; HER HUMBLE AND LOYAL SERVANTS, LIVING IN SPLENDID ...
LOOK!
SHE MANIFESTS HERSELF!!
IT'S THE LIVING GODDESS ...
DO YOU SEE?
SHE
SHE LOOKS LIKE MY BELOVED SEEKA

HA-HA
DO YOU SEE?
AYE...
OH GODDESS, MOTHER OF ALL LIFE, I ASK YOUR HUMBLE BEHOLDING EYE: YOU GRANT MY FOREMOST WISH... I...
NO
PLEASE
PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME
PLEASE.

Sedra left him; departing in the night with one of his slaves. He had entrusted her with the formula for his narcotic foodstuff, never once considering that the knowledge made her independent of the absolute control he wielded over Imesh's populace. She left a short note that was distant and impersonal. His heart and his spirit broken, he drove the entire population of the city out through a series of underground passageways which he then sealed with structural collapses. Now totally and completely alone, he dismantled the scaffolding around his half-completed monument with his bare hands over the course of several weeks. The monument was of great and vital significance on many of the inter-connecting chessboards; alignments of power and influence ebbed and flowed in its proximity. Its completion would have wrought profound and lasting change. Now it is a mere trinket; a curiosity for future generations to puzzle over and ultimately dismiss. Once a key figure and active piece, K'cor has sunk into dementia of the commonest sort; holding conversations with a Goddess for whom he is less than a joke; he will end his days broken and without significance. It is perhaps the oldest and most fundamental of the story that is Chess; the mighty King, reduced to a mere Pawn of his Queen. When he pointed out his manifestation to you, whom did you see?

Astoria.

You would do well to muse on that and keep it always close to your thoughts. Queen to King's Bishop Three.

My son Alfred was not an ignorant man, nor an evil man; but his motivation in taking both my place and my name were of a basic and mundane sort. Conquest was, to him, as it is to most Great Conquerors; a balm for his vanity, a jewel in his imagined crown. He thought himself clever that he chose to ignore the corrupt and insular matriarchy which ruled the Upper City. As I had timed and planned conquest for the right and perfect moment, it took place with clockwork efficiency and a minimal loss of life. Alfred sank happily into the opulent and coddled existence of the feted and legendary Military Hero. He grew fat on exotic foods and wines, his banquets were legendary and his appetites virtually without limit. Commerce flourished for a time — a short time, of course, as empires go, but a decade or so; which is always sufficient to convince the vainglorious and narrowly focussed that a Golden Age of their own devising has been wrought. The problem, of course, was that he had no thought or plan for any future; either his own or Iest's. The natural schism between matriarchy and patriarchy asserted itself in myriad ways in the day-to-day-life of the city state. Those subtle manifestations which interwove themselves through his government, clinging matriarchal vines, escaped Alfred's notice altogether. The more Noticeable and Assertive he blindly attempted to crush and curtail with Edicts, and when his Proclamations failed, with the brute force of his soldiers. Not surprisingly, the masses who had hailed his triumph a handful of years before, now turned on him. The Noticeable and Assertive rebellions vanished, but the subtle and insinuated tendrils multiplied exponentially; strangling the body politic and effectively neutralizing its now impotent leader.

Alfred retreated into Mysticism; surrounding himself with both Masters of Profound Wisdom and pitiful charlatans. As a latecomer to the hidden realms, now a corrupt and self-indulgent wastrel, he sought to purchase his knowledge and mystical power with mere gold. Naturally enough, his ignorance brought him power sufficient only to consume what was left of his failing health.

Those few friends remaining to him sickened mysteriously and died. Catastrophes swept the remnants of his empire.

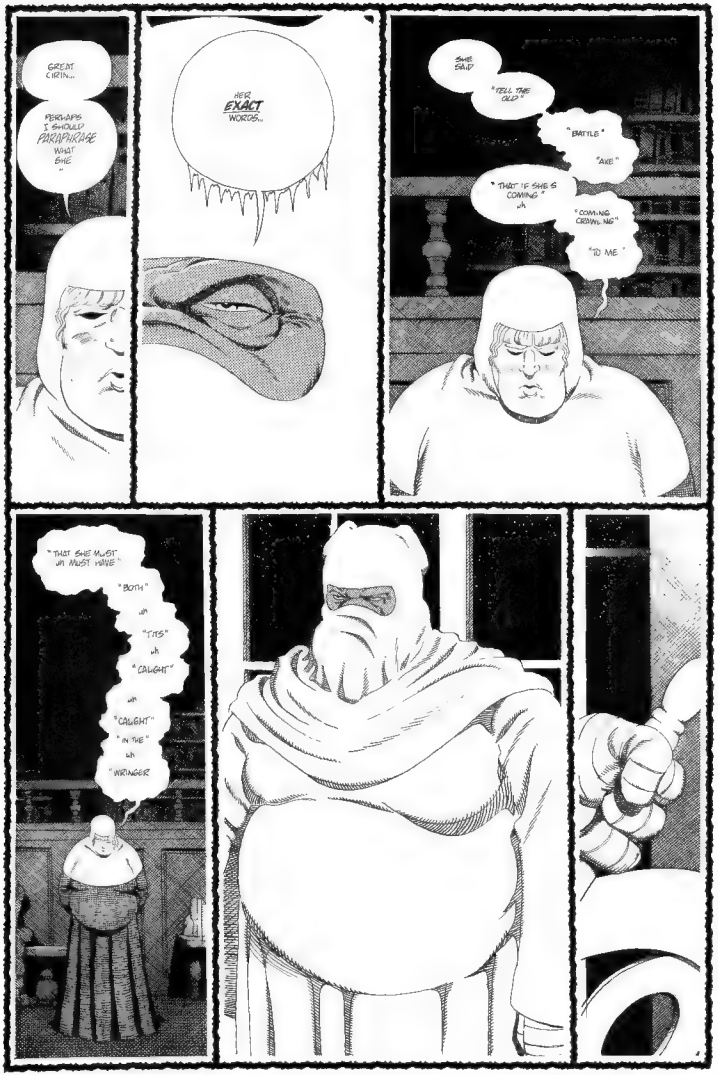
Driven nearly mad by his precipitous fall from grace, realization came late to Alfred that the Great Forces which he had believed himself to Contain, he had merely Held. Further, that what he had Held was now slipping, like sand, between his fingers. He replaced his governors and his Statesmen with Conjurors and Mages. He declared that all who would follow him were to be called Illusionists. All Life was an Illusion, he said, which explained (to his satisfaction, at least), the mire of failure in which he found himself. He conferred his name on the circle of devotees which surrounded him, and empowered them to do the same.

By the time of his death at the age of forty-one, fully one third of the population of the Lower City was named Suenteus Po and believed themselves to function within a single, divine consciousness. Since that day, Illusionism has alternately flourished and declined across the length and breadth of Estarcion; rising and then falling, gaining influence and prominence one day, and being subjected to persecution and purge the next.

In my subsequent incarnation, I was born to a gold miner and his wife in Rivershire Province, twenty years after Alfred's death.

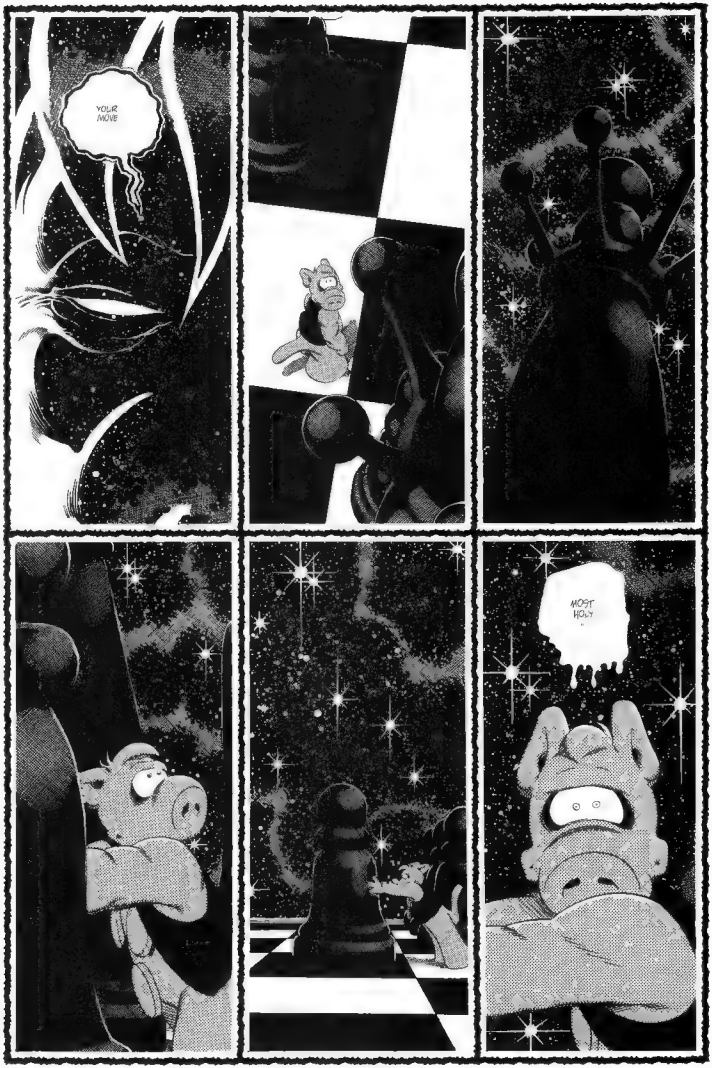
YOU INFORMED HER THAT I WISH TO SPEAK WITH HER.
YES, GREAT CIRIN...
AND?
SHE OUTLINED TWO...
...CONDITIONS
CONDITIONS!
YES, GREAT CIRIN -- SHE WANTS TO MEET ON NEUTRAL GROUND?
THE FELDWAR SUITE AT THE REGENCY HOTEL...
I SEE
AND WHAT ELSE?

SHE WANTS A NEW...
A NEW OUTFIT...
FOR THE OCCASION
A NEW
GO BACK AND INFORM MISS HIGH AND MIGHTY THAT SHE IS MY PRISONER
NOT I HERS
I SAID AS MUCH GREAT CRIN -- PRACTICALLY THOSE VERY WORDS
AND WHAT DID SHE SAY?
SHE -


GREAT CIRIN...
PERHAPS I SHOULD PARAPHRASE WHAT SHE "
HER EXACT WORDS...
SHE SAID
"TELL THE OLD"
"BATTLE"
"AXE"
"THAT IF SHE'S COMING"
uh
"COMING CROWN. NG"
"TO ME."
"THAT SHE MUST uh MUST HAVE
"BOTH"
uh
"TITS"
uh
"CAUGHT"
uh
"CAUGHT"
"IN THE"
uh
"WRINGER

SMASH!
SMASH!
SMASH!

TAKE HER FROM HER CELL TOMORROW MORNING
HAVE HER CLEANED UP
THEN TAKE HER.
SHOPPING..
BUY HER WHATEVER SHE WANTS
AND HAVE HER AT THE REGENCY NO LATER THAN NOON..
YES, GREAT CIRN.


YOUR MOVE
MOST HOLY

OH TAKIM I CAN SEE THE PERFECTION OF YOUR MULTIVERSE FROM THE SMALLEST INSECT TO THE MIGHTIEST AND MOST PERFECT OF YOUR PROPHETS (ME)
BUT I AM SORELY ROACH WEAKED GREAT TAKIM
I KNOW NOT WHAT I DO...
I'M JUST A BALL OF CONFUSION... THAT'S WHAT THE ROACH IS TODAY...
S-- T--
HEY HEY
I WANT TO REMAIN PURE IN ROACH-BOD! AND ROACH-MIND! BUT THE BOTTOM PART OF THE ROACH-SKULL... MY ROACH-SKULL™ CHEST EMBLEM™ IS...
IS PINK AND WET AND SLIMY AND..
AND..
SHUT UP
SHUT UP
SHUT UP
SHUT UP
SHUT UP
SHUT UP
SHUT UP
SHUT UP
SHUT UP
MUST... THINK OF SOMETHING... ELSE
THE DEADLY GAME OF CHESS CONTINUES! SUENTELUS POE'S NEXT MOVE IS KING'S BISHOP TO QUEEN'S BISHOP FOUR..
DISASTER LOOMS!
HOW VERY LIKE DISASTER..
FEEL LIKE I'M A HUMGAHUNGA-HUNKA BURNING UP.
BUT WHAT IF
WHAT IF
WHAT IF
WHAT IF
MUST RETELL MY ORIGIN! YES!!
ONCE A MILD MANNERED MERCHANT ROACH OF NOT INSUBSTANTIAL MEANS, IN A FREAK LABORATORY ACCIDENT I WAS BITTEN BY A RADIOACTIVE NYMPHOMANIAC.
NONO!
YESYES
NONO..
NONO!
HARHAR SNORTSNORT
NONO!
YESYES

SIGN
WEENSY
TEENSY
ONE
JUST...
A SIGN OF THE DIVINE WILL OF THE LIVING TARIM - PLEASE GREAT TARIM A SIGN!—
ONLY ONE THING CAN SAVE US NOW!
A SIGN OF YOUR DIVINE WILL...
A CRISIS OF FAITH! UNCERTAINTY AT EVERY LEVEL OF THE MULTIVERSE... EVEN THOSE PARTS WHICH HAVE BEEN RECONED FOR COMMERCIAL USE
RENDER UNTO ME YOUR HUMBLE SERVANT
I DOUBT YOU NOT BUT HEAR ME, OH TARIM JUST FOR THE SAKE OF ARGUMENT
OH GREAT AND MERCIFUL TARIM—I, THE MOST FERVENT OF YOUR PROPHETS, AM VERILY COMING APART AT THE PSYCHIC SEAMS
NO NO
YES YES YES YES
NO NO NO NO
THAT'S NOT IT...
BOB?
WHAT?
WHAT IS IT THEN?
MY... ORIGIN!
MUSTN'T... FORGET... MY ORIGIN...
ONCE A MILD MANNERED MERCHANT OF LABORATORY SUPPLIES I ACCIDENTALLY LICKED A FREAK NYMPHOMANIAC...

AH HAVE I SAY
AH- HAVE ARRIVED IN THE PROMISED ROACH LAND!
JAW'REE' 'VEY FOR THE BILINGUALLY INCLINED
..ONER FELDAN THAT..S
IT.S THE DAWNING OF THE AGE OF THE BLATTIDAE AND THE PHYLLODROMIDAE
BRING FORTH YO' TIRED YO' POOR, YO' HUDDLED MASSES YEARNIN' FO' IMPREGNATION AND A --
!
WE... SHUCK MAH CARAPACE AN' STIR-FRY ME IN THE SUNSHINE!!
PUNISHEROACH!! WHOSE MUST-HAVE DOUBLE BAG FIRST APPEARANCE AND COMING--
(..YOU'LL PARDON THE EXPRESSION)
-- WAS FORETOLD TO ME..
OH GREAT AND MERCIFUL TAUNT
PLEASE
LET ME REPHRASE THAT..

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dear Dave,

Just thought I'd write to tell you how much I enjoy *Cerebus*. I've only been collecting it for about 5 months, but I either have all issues as reprints, or on order.

As a "Marvel Zombie" I did not really appreciate any independent titles (other than the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers) until a friend bought the reprint of issue #67. As soon as I read that I became interested in *Cerebus*, and on my next trip to my local comic store I picked up #150 and #151, and I would have to say that *Mothers & Daughters* will probably turn out to be the best storyline in *Cerebus* yet.

It seems that you have decided to bring back all the old *Cerebus* cast that were ignored throughout *Jaka's Story* and *Melmoth*, and you weren't just talking about length when you said that it would rival *Church & State* (this letter is beginning to turn into a list of storylines. Just as well I haven't mentioned *Cerebus* or *High Society* yet).

I've got a couple of questions to ask you:

First, are you and Gerhard ever going to come down under? I know of at least three comic specialists in the city of Melbourne that all stock *Cerebus*, and one of them had a poll of customers that had *Cerebus* as "best limited series".

Whether you do come here or not, I'm going to try and visit the U.S. and Canada within a few years, and if you are still operating at the time (it should be before 2004) I'll drop into Kitchener.

And second, will Jaka be back in the not too distant future? Now that she's broken up with Rick, Cerebus stands a chance.

Whatever you do, I'll be with you until #300.

Thanks Dave.

Justin Rorke
78 Bowen Street
Echuca, Victoria,
AUSTRALIA

I would very much like to come to Australia some time. I'd also like to get back to England and Scotland. Unfortunately, this year is the US Tour. Out of the US Tour, we are gradually putting together a program of tools to assist retailers in turning people onto *Cerebus*. Most of 1993 will be taken up with putting that program into effect, as well as doing store signings in a number of the cities which weren't included this year. It is a life and death battle between quality comics material and all the other shit and we're putting together a group of creators, publishers and retailers who are interested in turning the tide of battle. I'm sure Australian creators and stores will be involved, but first we take Manhattan. Then we take Berlin.

Jaka will be back in the future. I'm still ambivalent about including her in *Mothers & Daughters* because it might distort the next story-line.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

Just finished #156, 'bout fell out of my chair when I saw actual replies in the letter column. A pleasant, and very necessary change. Answering your fan mail, (at least some of it, anyway) is a publisher's responsibility. Price of fame, you might say. Your absence from the column lent you an air of arrogance that was undeserved.

The column itself has always been interesting, if chaotic. Do you see it as an open forum, or are you just filling space? You could easily lend it some sense of direction, if you chose to.

New subject.

I've heard rumors from more than one source that Marvel and DC have plans to expand their lines to over 100 titles a piece in an effort drown out independent and self publishers like yourself. If it comes to pass, I see two possibilities for starters.

First, the comic buying public will be buried by all the crap coming out. Independents will lose in the competition for shelf space. Current fans will remain loyal of course, and ferret out their favorite titles, but new readers are going to be lost in the shuffle. The medium could become a real wasteland.

Second, drowning out the competition through sheer force of numbers is an impossible task from a creative standpoint. As a result, almost any idea for a title will get a green light. A lot of people with genuinely new ideas will not stand a chance for mass publication where none existed before. What do you foresee?

Oh, and hey, what's your favorite alcoholic beverage? You can tell a lot about a man's character by watching what he drinks.

Later,

Greg Zarcone
1809 Ivan Drive
Tallahassee, FL
USA 32303

Marvel and DC are doing what they have done for fifty years; glutting the market whenever comics become popular so that no other entity besides themselves and their clones (Valiant, Image, etc., etc.) can gain a toehold. When the bubble bursts under the Mount Everest of Shit, the only comics to survive are (surprise surprise) Marvel and DC. About seven per cent of the creators and retailers want to change this. I hope through a concerted effort that we can have twelve per cent of them on our side by 1995. The new creators publishing new books through Marvel and DC will get fucked over the same as they always have, to be replaced by new creators, convinced that they can change Bedlam from within. It has never happened and it never will happen. Bacardi and Diet coke, slice of lime; or Coors Light (Canadian version; the American one tastes like cough medicine) and Jack Daniels.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I have thought about this, and I have decided that you are the greatest regularly producing talent currently working in comics.

Why do I say this?

Well, Eisner only comes out with a project every once in a while now. (Not a bad thing. That's where he is in his evolution.)

And after Eisner you are the best.

Every point along the comedy spectrum you hit—satire, parody, slapstick, etc. Stopping there would be quite an accomplishment. But you don't stop there.

Every point along the tragedy spectrum you also hit. From the small pain of not yet realizing your dreams — to the enormous pain of being victimized by hostile forces — and friends and families and communities (to a neighborhood to a tribe to a nation to a world to a universe) being victimized by hostile forces — to the knowledge that is superimposed on all of this — of how fragile and temporary and special life is (a knowledge that won't save us from the endless blows we receive). But you don't stop there, Dave.

You plug into a lot of different genres. Is it possible at this point to accurately slap an easy genre label on your work? I don't think so. You started out doing a funny animal sword-and-sorcery magazine. Your work now seems to be funny animal-sword and sorcery-satire-parody-slapstick-tragedy-romance-allegory-epic-political thriller-parable . . . and I'm sure that there are a few genres I missed that you use. But you don't stop there, Dave.

You're also the guy who's doing the most experimenting in the different ways you can put words and images on a page so together they make the thing called comics. I can't even begin to list these because even if I sent you a book-length word description of everything you have done in this department it would still seem inadequate to me.

I like the work being done by Clowes, by the Hernandez Brothers, by Alan Moore . . . but you're the guy who's really out there, pushing back the boundaries.

I live in a suburb of Chicago and I look forward to meeting you when you come here on the tour.

Sincerely,

Kevin Miller
Elmhurst, Illinois
USA

Aw shucks.

No, really. Thanks a lot. It was nice meeting you. At the convention in Miami, Mr. Eisner (I actually managed to call him "Will" once over the course of two days) was watching Gerhard and I signing books, sketching and shaking hands for several hours. He came over and patted me on the back and said "I hope I have your stamina when I'm your age." People were still laughing a half hour later.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I would like to thank you for several things. First, your interview in DAK's Comics Interview #107 was something I had been waiting for for a long time. I have only been reading *Cerebus* for about two years. Most of what I have read has been from the phone books I have acquired, so I haven't heard much of what you have to say about anything outside of the story. I always thought that you were the type who didn't take shit from anyone. But, now I know that you believe. That is what I feel is the most important thing about any type of artist of any medium, be it ink, music, written word, whatever. You believe in what you're doing and that's what counts.

I always wondered exactly what it was about *Cerebus* that made me wait on pins and needles every month for the next issue (especially now that so much is happening). Around my house, we take our reading very seriously and every time a new issue comes in cheering breaks out. Literally! We have made a joyous noise at the return of all the supporting characters. And up until the interview, I didn't really have a good idea of who it was that was making me do this. I truly admire your approach to what is happening to the entertainment industry in general. Your need to do what you do, is somewhat of an inspiration to me. Even though we use different mediums of expression (I am a musician), I still have a deep respect for you.

You were absolutely correct when you said "Balls and talent together, that's usually pretty rare to find." Also I find the idea of one story for twenty-six years fucking nuts, but if anyone can accomplish it, you can.

I would also like to thank you for the 155 chapters you have given me and my friends. We really appreciate it. Oh yeah, thanks for the little grey asshole too, he's a little shit but he's okay.

Sincerely yours,

David Thompson
462 Denbigh Blvd., Apr. #46
Newport News, VA
USA 23602

P.S. Please consider a stop somewhere near Hampton, VA on your tour. I would really like to meet you and Gerhard personally.

I really don't see it as that big a deal. I mean, you're going to be working for a number of decades whoever you are, whether you have one job or twenty. I just figured I might as well work at one job and then work part-time after I'm forty-six. You're welcome anyway, I'm sure.

The closest stop to you would be Washington, I think.

★★★★★★★★★★

Yo Dave,

I haven't written anything in a looong time (outside of Lab reports), so I'll try to keep this coherent. (By the way, I'm not going to check my spelling or punctuation, so bear with me.)

I stopped reading *Cerebus* around #116 or so. Never stopped buying it, mind you, just reading it. You know how when you've ended a serious relationship, every fucking song on the radio reminds you of your girlfriend? Well, you had the nerve to draw her, and base a whole storyline around her. Well, it's about 3-1/2 years later and I'm still an emotional wreck. (I've gotten laid, mind you, but I'm still a wreck.) But, life goes on as they say, and I've gathered my *Cerebus* around me (except for #'s missing in action; 106, 107, 133 and 136) and I'm prepared to dig in (*Swords* 1-6 to *High Society* phone book and beyond).

I see from glancing at the latest issues that the book is getting bloody again and that the Roach is back. That should be good for sales, but I'm looking forward to reading the 'slow' issues, back to back, with no 30 day wait between them.

Maybe (just maybe, ah say, maybe) it'll be the intensive psycotherapy that I need. (I can see it now: Dave Sim, writer, artist, publisher, shrink!) Who knows?

Anyhow, I just wanted to drop you this note to let you know what I'm going to do and I'll drop you a line when I'm done. Hopefully it won't be a slobbering fan boy missive, but don't expect a New York Times Review either.

Regards,

Phil Peterson
83 B Grant St.
Boonton, NJ
USA 07005
(201) 299-2932

P.S. (my picture was in #86)

I only sip women these days. Gulping them is only going to give you a stomach ache and make you bald.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave and Ger,

In a little over 48 hours, you two will be appearing at the Hyatt Regency (Regency? Is this a coincidence?) in Schaumburg, Illinois. I've been anticipating your arrival with mixed emotions. I love your work, *Cerebus* is the ONLY book I've followed for the last ten plus years. I remember the proprietor of *Polaris Comics* in Milwaukee, Wisconsin berating people to try this book. Please forgive me for I have sinned, I passed it off as a Howard the Duck wannabe.

For some reason, I broke down and bought the Captain Cockroach/ DeadAlbino issues. And I've been a steady customer since. However, I've always sat back and never participated in the always interesting letters page. I look at it as more than decade long conversation. That's why I was never moved to write just because some of the letters were bullshit. I feel you have to be able to deal with this if you want to enjoy a good, balanced discussion of the world, politics and aardvarks.

But it was your imminent visit, what may be my only chance to meet you, that precipitated my writing. My problem is I'm uncomfortable with the idea of being considered a "fan". I continue to read *Cerebus* because it continues to be good. If for an extended period of time the quality plummeted, I would stop reading.

That doesn't seem like an unreasonable suggestion but the occasional reference to you as a god or to the book as literature sometimes convinces me that you would have fans no matter what you did, just not as many.

I've always wondered how people in your position don't get skewed self-images. I expect you would get rave reviews from some of your readers if you published a collection of your favorite vomits. I often notice this kind of thing while listening to the radio. Disc jockeys will get calls telling them that they are "radio gods" no matter how lame their performance.

This leaves me in a quandary. Do I join the possibly rabid masses who will surely turn out on April 26 to touch the hem of your coat and bask in your greatness? Do I want to be a part of the warping of your egos?

I will be there. The need to create is strong in me, even if inertia can be nearly as strong. I will be going to gain some insight into the process of turning dreams of writing into reality.

I'll be the tall guy with two young daughters. However, I will not be wearing a Cerebus T-shirt.

Yours truly,

Kevin Donahoe
146 Park Hill Tr.
Carol Stream, IL
USA 60188

It was very nice meeting you and signing the books for your daughters, even though the older one seemed a little shy. The easiest way to avoid getting a skewed self-image is to disbelieve both the praise and the criticism. If you believe one you have to believe the other and that isn't possible.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I took great interest in the letter from the New Zealander who was going to school in Maui. As an outsider he didn't want to generalize about the American education system. As an insider, a 100% red-blooded American, I'll do it for him. Our education system is sending our country to Hell in a handbasket.

It is no coincidence that so many examples found in Dr. Peter's "The Peter Principle" come from the education field. Many of our educators are total idiots. I remember the chemistry teacher who was senile to the point of having the personality of a grade school child. There was the football coach who got stuck teaching a biology class. I can't remember a single day where the subject of science ever came up. Want to talk about grammar? We called our grammar teacher "Uncle Perve" (short for Pervert). His idea of teaching was to stand up and read grammar rules from the English book. The man had a horrible monotone.

My french class was fun. We would slip in and replace the french tape with a Monty Python cassette. With the headphones on our teacher was never the wiser. Later in life I traveled to France. I got hopelessly lost and couldn't ask even the most basic of questions but I can quote most Monty Python sketches by heart.

Now I'm older and full of regrets so I get concerned when my daughter shows the same attitude toward school that I did. She just got her report card and every single grade has dropped to the point where she is barely passing. The teacher wrote "Good work, Janna!" in the teacher's comment box. I am currently checking into the options of home schooling. I no longer have any faith in the American education system. For the record, I also do not have any faith in the "Education President." George Bush (and the competition for that matter) simply doesn't have a clue.

God help us. I am afraid that we are rapidly becoming a country unable to help ourselves.

David Clore
AAFES, PSC 05 Box 2134
APO AE
USA 09057

I think what we have to do is provide everyone with everything free of charge. CD players, sports cars, alcohol, drugs, expensive houses. That way all the people who only want material things will get out of the work-force and leave the jobs to people who want to work and get out of the schools and leave education to people who want to learn.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

This letter is a multi-faceted apology for my letter that was printed in *Cerebus* #156 ("Mind Game V"). I apologize to you for ranting and raving about one of probably tons of dipshit little comic shops that don't carry *Cerebus*.

Also, I apologize to Neil Johnson, owner of *Emerald City Comics & Collectibles, Inc.* (9249 Seminole Blvd., Seminole, FL 34642; (813) 398-2665; in Pinellas County, north of St. Petersburg). Neil is the "comic shop owner I used to buy from in St. Pete" that I mentioned in my last letter. I was so busy raging over the bad comics shop that I forgot to mention the good one. In fact, Neil is the one who got me to read *Cerebus* in the first

place! If he really likes a book, he'll often let people borrow a few issues to see if they like it. That's how I got into *Cerebus, Concrete, Mage,* and *Shade: The Changing Man.* He's even got a stuffed Cerebus in the store!

And so (as a friend of mine in St. Pete told me), upon reading my letter, Neil ran around his store in a frenzy, cursing my name and questioning my legitimate parentage. I had turned on him like a rabid dog, and he told his employees (hey Rich, hey Dave) to rip me off whenever I came to town again. I deserved it; and so I promised to write another letter plugging his store (here it is), and I promised to mention the situation to you at the Miami convention (I did). (And if this is printed: Are you happy now, Neil?!)

And speaking of the Miami convention: it was great! I was pleasantly surprised to see Gerhard at what I understand to be a semi-regular convention appearance. You were very polite to everyone —even when you iced that moron that kept asking you to bring the Roach back as a Judge Dredd parody. You seemed more than happy to accommodate head-sketch requests from people, like Lord Julius and Jaka (and surprising my friend, Sean, with a Prince Mick sketch). I have to admit, we couldn't quite remember the reference to the Elrod "bunny" and the Cerebus "tree" you put in Sean's *High Society* "phone book." When we looked it up later, we bust a gut laughing! I'm gonna have to read the whole damn 150 issues again just to re-live all that stuff!

I really feel like a fool now for not having read any of Will Eisner's work. As I understand it, his stuff is like the *Citizen Kane* of comic books. He was RIGHT THERE and I didn't have anything I could say to him. I will have to read some of his stuff now, as I should have a long time ago. Hopefully, such a situation will never happen again.

Lastly: I know you told me, but I already forgot again — is Iest pronounced "Eye-est" or "Ee-est"?

Thanks again for your commitment to about 27 years of your life.

Chad Rivard
3469 Spur Rd., Apt. #112
Orlando, FL
USA 32826

I had a feeling you were never going to send the letter after you mentioned it to me in Miami. I'm glad you did, because obviously this ties in with what I'm trying to do with the Tour; stop bitching about the ninety-three per cent of the comics field that is happy following Marvel over the cliff and start emphasizing the guys who, like me, feel as if they're trying to mow a golf course with a pair of scissors.

My first Coors Light tonight will be dedicated to Neil Johnson and Emerald City Comics & Collectibles.

Cheers, Neil. (And it's "Ee-est".)

★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Hi, it's the man from Meaford (or actually the son of a woman from Meaford). One of the reasons I'm writing is to thank you for the great sketches you drew for me at the Golden Apple signing. It was a good deal better than the last time I went to a signing (Tom Defalco when I was in high school, sometime like '82 or '83). I've enjoyed your work (as well as Gerhard's) since issue 65.

The other reason deals with the question I finally got the balls to ask — "How old is Cirin?" Your response — "Depends on who you ask." I guess I shouldn't have expected a straight answer but I pressed anyway. My mistake was trying to connect Cirin with the invasion of Iest by Suenteus Po's son Alfred, which I put as approx. 150 years ago. The response I got to that dealt with the ambiguity of Suenteus Po's age (further confused by issue 156 which you were quoting and which went on sale the next week — tsk tsk tsk). All this is prologue for the benefit of the readers of Aardvark Comment (assuming this is printed).

Let's start off with Suenteus Po. How many of them are there? The writer of *The True History of the 1413 Election* is Suenteus Po (High Society). So is the leader of the Illusionists (issues 20, 28, 156, as well as others). Alfred named himself Suenteus Po the second after his father fell off the horse (issue 108, pg. 9–10). Are all these the same man? (Well obviously Alfred is not his father and vice versa, but is either of them the illusionist?) If not, and there are four (at least) Suenteus Pos, then the invasion cannot be determined by the information given in *Cerebus* so far, at least by my reading. Add to this Oscar's appraisal of the upper city ("insular and corrupt matriarchy" — issue 122, pg. 17) and the title of Cirin's book (*The New Matriarchy* — issue 20) all I can conclude is that Cirin rises to power after the invasion, nothing more. Why is all this important? Well hold on to your hats people for my working hypothesis is that Cirin is Cerebus' grandmother.

Cirin is an aardvark. We the readers can't be sure of this since Cirin has always been shown completely covered up. But she is obviously not human, and unless there are more animals that have human intelligence and magical powers, she must be an aardvark. She is a mother. To gain power in this matriarchy one must give birth (issue 53, pg. 12 and issue 62, pg. 8). Cirin is powerful in the political structure, thus she is a mother. As in all syllogisms, this one is dependent on the truth of the assumptions, and thus I could be wrong, but I'm willing to bet I'm right. Weisshaupt said there are three aardvarks in Estaricion (issue 76, pg. 10). Cirin and Cerebus account for two of them. Where is the third? Who is the third? Cerebus' mother? Cirin's child? Cirin's birthing must have been recorded and known, for this is what damaged Astoria's position in the government (issue 62, pgs. 5–8). Is that where Weisshaupt found out about the third aardvark? All this is under the supposition that aardvark breed aardvarks although an aardvark could be a genetic mutation of humans.

Another problem deals with the psychic aspect of Cirinists. Is this because of Cirin? (An aardvark helping communication inside of the matriarchy.) Is this something that was in existence before? Not enough information is available, although I can posit the possibility that you Dave didn't think of this psychic communication channel until after *Church and State,* but that is just guesswork on my part.

Now Astoria bears mentioning in this inquiry. She was chosen successor to Cirin (issue 62, pgs. 1–10). There was opposition to this decision (ibid.). Now whether that opposition had to do with a power struggle by members of the government or because it was the first time a successor had been chosen is not mentioned. There is a third possibility that I find doubtful. That is that Astoria was

not liked by this opposition group. She was picked while still a child, so how could this opposition complain over her politics or personality ("she would just outgrow it, ma'am)? Her pregnancy, disappearance, and reappearance (sans child) caused an uproar in the government (ibid.). Her stance during questioning ("state-owned prostitution, pharmaceutically-assisted miscarriages, ownership of men, guaranteed minimum incomes for women over the age of fifteen and the inalienable right to self-determination within those parameters" — issue 82, pg. 9) created the Kevilist splinter group and made her an outlaw in the government. I believe that this was the first and only time Cirin tried to pick a successor (although that was one of the questions I was thinking of asking at the signing). If so this would make Cirin probably nearing her later years, allowing for her child to grow up old enough to bear Cerebus. This is more fun than talking about *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake.*

Finally I would like to comment on the last statements made between us. "I hope you stay with Cerebus as long as Gerhard." "I hope so too." I feel that an author has only one duty to his audience: to write the best work he can. For if he doesn't then the audience is within its rights to leave. I have read completely through a book apiece by Robert Ludlum, Anne Rice, and Dick Francis. Don't expect me to read a second. I have dropped books by other authors once I decided they insulted my intelligence. You have never insulted my intelligence, but assuming the highly improbable happens, I'll drop this comic like a hot potato (like *Doom Patrol, Batman, The Trouble with Girls, American Splendor,* the list goes on and on and on!). Keep up the good work, *Cerebus* is one of the comics I must buy the minute I see it.

Michael Sean Lavender
10250 Beach Blvd.
#224
Stanton, CA
USA 90680

Very weird experience being in Los Angeles and having someone mention Meaford, Ontario. I hope the next couple of issues help to clear up some of your Suenteus Po confusion, Michael.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I had forgotten this.

Last issue, when you introduced the Punisheroach, I rolled my eyes. I've absolutely adored *Mothers & Daughters* thus far, and the bug has always been my favourite reoccuring character. Like many others, however, I've gotten sick of all the Punisher hype, along with Wolverine, Ghost Rider (is he as popular as Marvel would have us believe?), and (God help us) Lobo. What once may have had the potential to be dark and powerful has become standard and trivial. The whole concept of the anti-hero has been perverted into something boring and infinitely marketable. Graphic violence and overt psychosis have become trendy, and are being gobbled up without even the seasoning of plot and character development by the type of mewling meat these "dark knights" wouldn't thunk twice about stomping into the pavement for just looking at them funny.

So my little inner literature critic muttered, "Tsk, tsk" at the end of 154. But 155 made me remember something I'd long since blocked out of my consciousness: I, too, was once a Punisher fan.

It was back before he had a title of his own, when he was a supporting cast member in the *Spider-Man* titles. Every time he'd show up, I'd buy the comic. I was overjoyed when Frank Miller used him in *Daredevil,* and I thought I'd died and gone to heaven when he was finally given a limited series (which I now hardly remember, though I think Mike Zeck did the pencils).

The Punisher was interesting because he was insane. The war, the loss of his family had unhinged his mind, and he had nothing left but his pathological war on crime. This is also true of the Batman, but the DC Dark Knight is different. One can't really picture the Batman losing: he strains, he suffers, but he is never defeated. Batman is a god, whereas the Punisher was just a man — a small, suffering man — who built a strong, hard-as-nails shell to protect himself from his pain. Frank Castle showed us just how alienated from society one can become.

The fascinating thing about his appearances in other titles was watching other characters trying to pierce through his shell to reach the man underneath. No one seems to try anymore. The Punisher is now given almost as a role model — a hero. But he's never been a hero. He survives, he perseveres, because he would rather face any hardship, any torment, than face his own feelings about the loss of his family. What kind of society would see thus man as a hero? The Punisher's repressed emotions and pathological denial are just reflections of the same symptoms on a societal level. The U.S. claims to be a free society, and yet it has capital punishment, universally a symptom of totalitarianism and a tool of repression. It claims to protect life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and yet denies its citizens the basics needed for survival: a roof over one's head, access to medical care, etc. You can tell a lot about a society by looking at its heroes.

Anyway, I like the Punisheroach. He's very much an oppressive patriarchal symbol and all (love those crossbows), but he's reacting against an equally oppressive matriarchy, so that's okay. It's kind of a reversal of what we see in our own society — male-bashing that's unfair but still pretty understandable, considering all the shit that women still have to put up with.

All the doubling that's going on is great, especially the whole "evil twin" dialogue. I'm glad to see that the Man in the Moon isn't quite as omniscient as he pretends to be. I'd hate to think that the universe is legalistic and anal-retentive enough to have someone like him as its resident lorekeeper. The universe wants to play, and its beginning to look like *Mothers & Daughters* is going to provide it with a pleasant romp. And it's high time, too. A little bit of chaos never hurt anyone.

Punchem Innaface,

Sam Hurwitt
733 Chester St.
Oakland, CA
USA 94607

Thanks for your kind words. I think the Punisher shows how far the stores (most of them) have retreated into a core following of ten year olds. Youngblood should knock a couple of years off of that audience age if the first issue is any indication of things to come.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave 'n Ger',

I finally feel as though I've been reading *Cerebus* for a long time. My first issue was #100, but it wasn't new then and I think my first new issue was #114, or somewhere in the middle of *Jaka's*

Story. By then I'd already gleaned most of *Sacred Wars, Astoria*, etc., and I was a thoroughly confused 14 year-old. Now I have most of the issues through reprints (except a few oddballs like a great copy of #26 that I picked up for only $4 U.S.), and I've matured into an only slightly confused 18 year-old. This is my weird way or saying thanks for putting out a graphic narrative that has never failed to impress and mystify me.

With any luck, my graduation present to myself is going to be a trip to Kansas City to have the penultimate thrill of meeting you in person. Sorry, the ultimate thrill is talking to Mike Watt and George Hurley each year in Omaha. (I never can find Ed Crawford, though . . .) Anyway, I hope my ancient '70 VW Type III Square' can make the 600 mile round-trip. Does anyone else out there share my infinite faith in air-cooled Volkswagens?

Finally, I've got a question for you as a Canadian: Why is all the Canadian coinage that worms its way this far south is so old? I've got $1.93 Canadian here and none of it's newer than 1974. Some plot to send us all the bum coins?

Pie a la mode,

M'Grady
Box 381
Stanton, NE
USA 68779

With any luck, after issue 300 comes out, you'll be an enlightened twenty-nine year old in search of a new comic book to get addicted to. Looking forward to meeting you in Kansas City.

Will another American reader please write in and tell me if they find a Canadian coin later than 1974? As if we don't have enough trouble with Quebec threatening to separate.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

Just finished #157 and have finally decided to write you a letter: for two reasons. I have always planned to write, since about issue #4, when I realized you really had something with Cerebus.

First to simply thank you for all the years of pleasure that I have had from reading *Cerebus*. After purchasing the first five issues I immediately knew I'd be with you and Cerebus for the long run, hopeful as hell all the business assholes didn't destroy your dream of reaching at least issue #300. At the time I started reading *Cerebus*, I was a pretty naive university student; but right then I vowed to religiously buy every issue. Look, if you were going to gamble your entire life on putting out every month such high quality "art" yourself, the least I could do was "collect" it (though I got lots of comics, I don't like to call myself a collector, sort of rhymes with speculator). That was definitely one of my better decisions, for no matter what condition my life has been in, that hour or so a month I spent reading *Cerebus* has always given me a kick, either a good laugh or simulated my far too little used thought process. (I mean reading *Cerebus* can reverse the comfortably mind numbing effect of eight hours of daytime TV.) I just really like the book; guess I first started admiring the art but now think it's really the story that has me hooked. The central reality of loneliness, suffering, and meaningless of life in the plot has always added a whole underlying dimension to the terrific humour and always magnified it. I think I can just relate to a little guy with an attitude, even if he is an aardvark. But it's the themes in the story that seem to appeal to me most, the first book setting the stage, characters, and environment and the simple theme of survival; in *High Society* the theme of wealth and power; in *Church and State* the theme of power, emotional happiness, spiritual enlightenment; *Jaka's Story* love and suicide; *Melmoth* death and failure; *Mothers and Daughters* rebirth and starting over. But central is the struggle for Power and Enlightenment in a society ruled by different mixtures of religious force, mystical force, political force, and military force. Always liked the complex mixture of characters and personalities from the comically insane to the downright evil. The overall continuity of the story is what makes *Cerebus* so unique and many times on cold winter nights I have sat down and reread the series.

Dave, it takes guts to do a book like *Cerebus*, always choosing what you wanted to do and not what the critics might think is more financially marketable in the short term. I guess every fan has certain expectations and mindsets of what they like and if they don't get it might question the $2.75 monthly investment. In our culture so many of us have a steady diet of good guy verses bad guy, action, then good guy wins finally, that a book dealing with life's difficulties, people's desperation and suffering, questions of griefs and needs, and matters of the spirit may seem a little foreign. However that sort of tale seems to strike a chord with me because, no doubt, the process has had me looking at some of my own opinions and beliefs. I think looking at Cerebus' problematic life, the crisis and disease in life, the death and destruction, the wonderful comic humour and parody, has helped and I have never been bored. I've gotten comments like "I'm falling asleep in *Melmoth*" or "Shit, two pages of Cerebus taking a piss" or "I want some action". But you got away with it all and I think the loyal readership will continue to expand because of such innovations.

However in starting to read *Mothers and Daughters* I seem to detect a new found optimism in your writing. You seem to have the spark back, an excitement about the work and dare I say it, a greater caring. Christ, you're even answering the letters again. Maybe it's the excitement and risk of the tour, the upturn in business, or just the arrival of summer, but if the quality continues to soar I can see *Cerebus*' popularity skyrocketing this year. You seem to not be just transcribing a yarn you scripted fifteen years ago, and going on with the attitude "Now I just gotta go into production mode and draw the stuff, but all the fun of creating the plot and characters is over and shit if they don't like it screw them, I've established my reputation and paid my dues, and if worse comes to worse I can always throw out a few crowd-pleasing single issues to pay the bills." Your attitude for excellence and continual growth in expressing yourself in your medium has always come through and that's so rare. Obviously it can become frustrating if some fans say didn't like this or that about 'your' work (or personality) when you poared long hours and all your guts into it, and risked your financial security. And also having to deal with the business side where there is an ocean of grey suited sharks ready to make a fortune off of any success you acquire, can grind you down. But you never gave up and there you are after all the years still signing issues and sketching pictures at the cons for individual fans. Don't tell me Dave Sim doesn't give a fuck. I hope you're

still drawing Cerebus at sixty, and the story for you and Cerebus never ends like *Melmoth* started "sitting in a bar stunned, alone, and unloved". With the economy of Winnipeg and Canada like it is, I see too many people's stories ending like the *Melmoth* story start. I can relate, since I was there for a while too, like you and Cerebus were, with his sword far too close to his neck. Dave, if business and the women, cause you to go to Dino's too much just remember there is a few of us in Winnipeg who left Dino's to go buy *Cerebus* and always will buy *Cerebus*. Mind Games VI has had your best symbolism yet; hey, I might even try to go up the tower myself and reach the tenth sphere. At least Cerebus and you are trying ascension again and not doing too badly. Neither am I, developing classified computer software for the military establishment. Thought I'd try my new computer out on this letter.

Now for the second reason I was moved to write. Business. Let me explain the situation in Winnipeg. For the last five or six months I have been going down to the local distributor to get my monthly fix of without doubt, the best comic in Canada and possibly the world, *Cerebus*. The distributor, let's call him Joe, keeps saying Dave hasn't published yet. OK, after three months I start to get a little worried, has *Cerebus* folded, has Dave o.d.'d, has Joe cancelled due to lower sales. By the way this Joe has had the monopoly for almost every store from here to nearly Vancouver and has become quite rich with distribution, very rich. So after another month I go in and ask again "Has anyone in Winnipeg gotten *Cerebus*?" "No" was the answer, "we haven't gotten *Cerebus*, and therefore no stores in Winnipeg have; they're not out yet." Oh well I thought, Dave's on tour and behind schedule. So about three weeks later I go in and ask again. "Oh, he tells me there's some kind of mix-up and the last shipment went to our wrong warehouse. Get them out shortly." Shit you think a distributor would at least phone you and straighten out any problem in a month or two. It had been almost six months and no *Cerebus*. So just last week I find out that one brave store in Winnipeg has had the guts to leave Joe and take up with another distributor Diamond, primarily due to Joe withholding issues, and generally jerking them around. Don't know the details, could be faults on both sides. When I arrived I hit the roof, here was another loyal fan walking up to the counter with the last copy of issues 154, 155, 156 and 157. Joe had never released them on his shelves or to any other store in Winnipeg. Therefore the following conclusions are possible:

1) Joe is not paying the bills and you are not sending him *Cerebus* (a common business practice) or some other dispute.
2) Joe has cancelled his order.
3) Joe is withholding issues from the shelves.
4) Someone is buying up all Joe's issues and he has none to release (if this is the case why has he not ordered more copies, I mean for six months).

Anyways if 1,2,3,4 is true at least the guy could have told me and not strung me along for six months always saying Dave has not published yet. Then I could have found another source and not missed the last four issues. I have the greatest respect for the employees that run Joe's three stores, but after all of this my business goes to Diamond. Why not tell me he is sold out or cancelled *Cerebus*. This is the latest in a long chain of jerk arounds, from poor back-order service, outrageous back issue prices and far too low buying offers. I can see why an artist can become bitter in having to deal with such people to make a living. Watch out for this guy Dave. I think *Cerebus* would be much more popular from here to Calgary if you did not have such distribution "bottle-necks" as you put it in your Comment #157 (ya, a good friend lent me his copy last night).

Hope to maybe see you in Minneapolis on June 7 — never met you before.

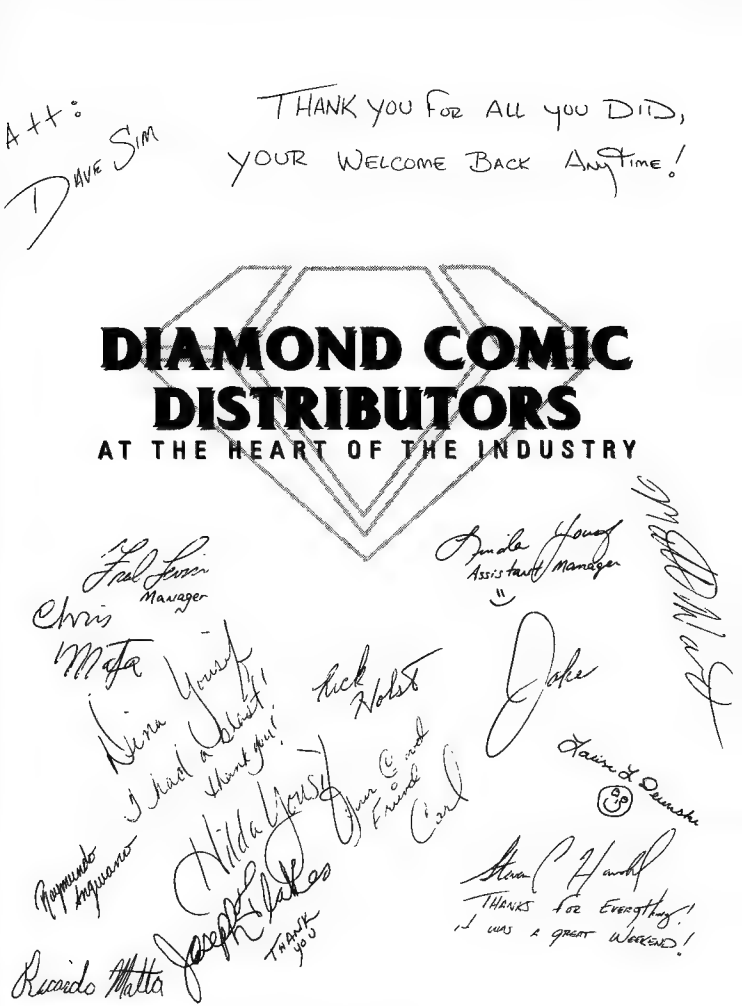
Still need 154 and 155. Enclosed is a check for two copies each if you've got them.

Yours sincerely,

Neil McIntyre
729 Rosseau Ave. West
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R2C 1Y1

P.S. So pissed off with a certain Joe, love to see this letter published in an issue of *Cerebus* and that issue sitting in one of Joe's stores waiting to be sold.

For legal purposes, I will mention at this point that this is a letter of comment. You are speculating about Joe's business practices and making mention of your personal experiences with his operation. I'm sure there are many many people who have found Joe a pleasure to deal with and who would have nothing but kind things to say about him. The answer to your question is that Joe is not paying his bills *on time*. From his stand-point, this is perfectly acceptable; he has always paid his bills and we have nothing to complain about. From our stand-point, this is unfair to all of the other distributors who are paying on time, or who, if they are going to be late with a payment, take the trouble to notify us. Joe also takes the position that not sending him books (which is what we do now if a distributor is late paying. Makes sense to us; no money no books) is unfair to the stores and to the *Cerebus* fans. You are quite right; there are a lot of people who only have access to stores serviced by Joe (apart from subscribing or mail order). That part definitely bothers me; that we are punishing the *Cerebus* fans. Joe takes the least number of books of any distributor; we've even made an exception to our minimum order just for him so that he could continue to order direct instead of having to order from another distributor. There does come a time, however, when someone becomes more trouble than they are worth. Since he is the only distributor who doesn't pay on time, it hardly seems worth the trouble to keep phoning long distance looking for payment or printing up "2nd notice" and "third notice" forms just for him. We had another distributor we had the same problem with, but they are now paying right on time, same as everyone else. If Joe would pay his bills on time to us, he would get the books he ordered without any difficulty. I rather suspected he must be telling people that the fault is ours; that we are off-schedule or shipping them to the wrong place. I find that unethical, personally and I'm only sorry that it is the fans of Ger's and my work who have to suffer for it.


Att:
Dave Sim
THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DID,
YOUR WELCOME BACK ANYTIME!
DIAMOND COMIC DISTRIBUTORS
AT THE HEART OF THE INDUSTRY
Fred Lesser
Manager
Linda Young
Assistant Manager
Chris
Mata
Nina
Rick Holst
Jake
Karen & Dennis
Wilda Lewis
Your Friend
Carl
Raymundo Anguiano
Ricardo Matta
Joseph Rubas
THANK YOU
Steve Harold
THANKS FOR EVERYTHING!
I WAS A GREAT WEEKEND!
-THE CHICAGO TEAM-

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GALLERY

CEREBUS 157
(1992)
page seven

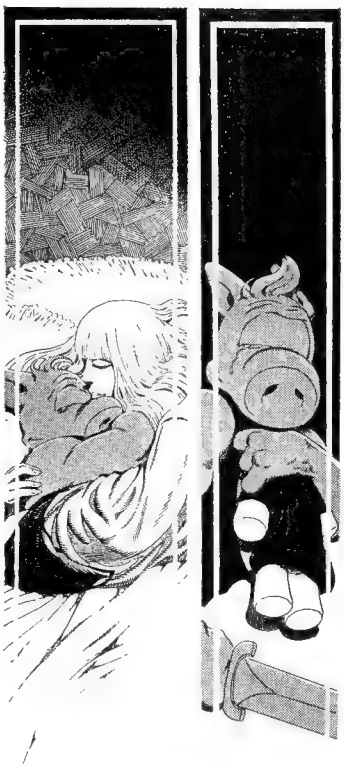
Cerebus,
Jaka,
Missy,

figures
pencilled
and inked
by Dave Sim.
Backgrounds
by Gerhard.

Autographed
by Dave Sim
and Gerhard.

pen and ink
on
illustration
board
10 X 15
minimum bid:
$100.

bidding closes
August 3, 1992
5 P.M. EST.


The first night you spent with Jaka; when she had agreed without hesitation to accompany you; to be your life's companion. You had dozed briefly, drained by the excitement of that most enchanting day's events. And then you awoke to find her looking at you. Without a word, she had taken you into her arms. There was the light, sweet scent of perfumed soap on her skin and in her hair, the reassuring pressure of her arms enfolding you, and the delicate warmth of her breath on your eyelids.
For the first time in your conscious memory, for the first time in fact, since you were a baby; a single tear, full and warm, rolled down your right cheek and you fell into a very deep and entirely dreamless slumber . . .

GALLERY

CEREBUS 157
(1992)
page twenty

Cerebus

Cerebus pencilled and inked by Dave Sim. Backgrounds by Gerhard.

Autographed by Dave Sim and Gerhard.

pen and ink on illustration board
10 X 15
minimum bid: $100.

bidding closes August 3, 1992 5 P.M. EST.

GALLERY

TYRANT
AND
AARDVARK

Tyrannosaurus Rex pencilled and inked by Steve Bissette (from the limited series TYRANT! which will be self-published by Spider-baby Graphix in 1993). Cerebus pencilled and inked by Dave Sim. Backgrounds and colour by Gerhard.

pen and ink and water colour dyes on illustration board
9 ½ X 12
minimum bid: $150.

COMIC BOOK LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

bidding closes August 3, 1992 5 P.M. EST.

GALLERY

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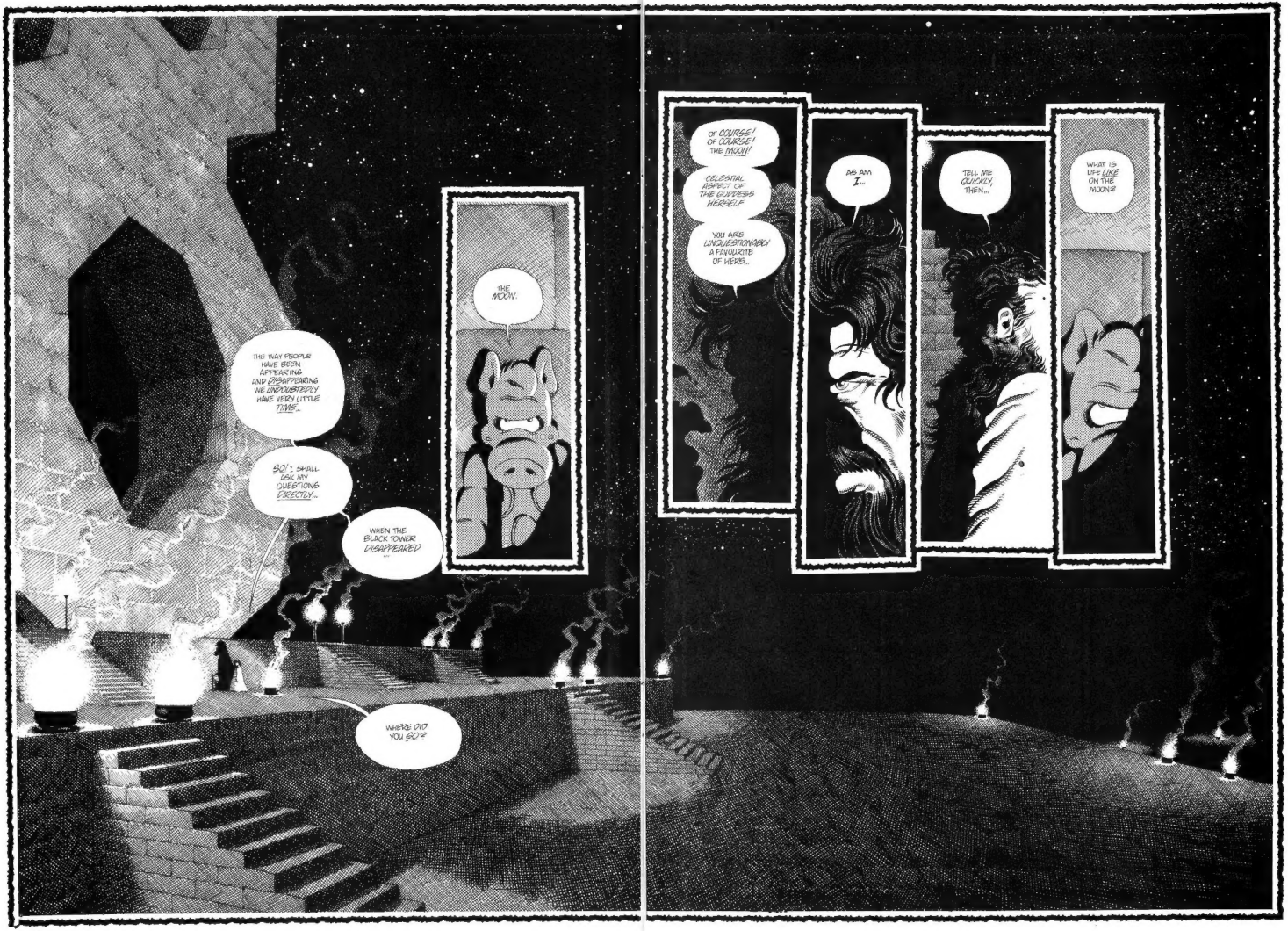
WHERE DID YOU GO?
WHEN THE BLACK TOWER DISAPPEARED ...
SO! I SHALL ASK MY QUESTIONS DIRECTLY...
THE WAY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN APPEARING AND DISAPPEARING WE UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE VERY LITTLE TIME...
THE MOON.
WHAT IS LIFE LIKE ON THE MOON?
TELL ME QUICKLY, THEN...
AS AM I...
OF COURSE! OF COURSE! THE MOON!
CELESTIAL ASPECT OF THE GODDESS HERSELF
YOU ARE UNQUESTIONABLY A FAVOURITE OF HERS...

WITHIN THE HOUR, NOW FULLY-ARMED, THE PICTS STREAM FROM HUNDREDS OF HIDDEN ENTRANCES TO THEIR UNDERGROUND LAND -- THEIR TORCHES BLAZE TO LIFE IN THE CHILL AIR OF EARLY WINTER IN THE REED MARCHES... A LIGHT, DAMP BREEZE AT THEIR BACKS, THE GRIM FIGURES MOVE EASILY AND SURE-FOOTEDLY, SLOWLY ARRANGING THEMSELVES INTO ORDERED UNITS; TWELVE MEN DEEP AND TWELVE MEN ABREAST... AS THE LAST FEW MEN TAKE THEIR PLACES....
A CRY RISES UP FROM THE THROATS OF EACH MEMBER -- AND THE FORMATION LAUNCHES ITSELF FORWARD INTO THE NIGHT, TORCHES THRUST FORWARD AND UP IN THE DIRECTION OF THE PICTS ANCIENT AND ANCESTRAL HOME; TEST!